

Show to get the Bard spinning in his grave

Wareside Entertainers certainly lived up to their name with their recent production, *Bullets and the Bard*.

For such a relatively small village it has a large reservoir of artistic talent. Having in their last show successfully tackled one of the more difficult farces (Michael Frayn's *Noises Off*) they have now presented a sort of two-night variety show based on the slightest of storylines entitled *Hamlet – The Musical!*.

Really an extended series of song and dance routines enthusiastically played by a cast of a dozen, half of whom were dancers, all the songs, selected by Rebecca Andrews from various sources far, far removed from Shakespeare, were acted out karaoke-fashion to sound tracks manoeuvred by Andy Burns. The whole well-rehearsed floor show was put together and directed by Ruth King, ably assisted by Deborah Sinclair. In fact, Ms King, who also sang and danced, devised all the creative and at times very energetic choreography – a busy lady. Ms Sinclair, incidentally, also played a

Review

Bullets and the Bard – The Variety Show,
Wareside Entertainers,
Wareside Village Hall,
Fri Sep 23-Sat Sep 24

gangster's moll – she got shot half way through, alas.

The 'plot' for what it's worth revolved around a company led by Alex Young and Judith King, first being auditioned for parts in this Shakespearian extravaganza, then being rehearsed and eventually playing it – all of which must have made the Bard rotate wildly in his Stratford grave. If you can imagine the odd bit of Victoria Wood turning up, that will give you the flavour.

The lighting was by Roger Martin and all the members of the cast individually deserve credit, but as there were only three other men involved – including a young dancer Tom Moore – Bob Kerr and Brian Houghton should be identified as an amusing double act of tunesmith gangsters who at the end shot Hamlet (at least I think so, it was that sort of plot) before singing *My Way* and bringing a jolly village evening to a close.

Leonard Rogers



SHOWTIME: The cast of Wareside Entertainers' *Bullets and the Bard*

Photo: MER0770772

First rate jukebox musical

Review

Return to the Forbidden Planet,
East Herts Operatic Society,
Broxbourne Civic Hall,
Thu Sep 22-Sat Sep 24

Very loosely adapted from Shakespeare's last play *The Tempest* and the 1959 science fiction film *Forbidden Planet*, it is described by the author as a jukebox musical and is packed with rock 'n' roll songs from the 1950s and '60s.

The company is to be congratulated on giving so many young performers leading parts – what they lacked in experience they more than compensated for with their energy and enthusiasm.

The set depicting the control room of a space rocket was cleverly designed, with an upper gallery, a large TV screen and control desks, which gave the dancers plenty of room.

Technically, the show was first rate, with excellent computer animation and graphics by Steve and Andrew Grain and video projection by Jo and Matt Hudson. The sound and light design was by Nigel Fruin, although the mikes were badly adjusted which unfortunately caused hearing problems due to distortion.

The cast were at their best when singing or dancing – great choreography by Lauren MacKenzie – but not quite so competent with the spoken words, and the characterisation in the love interest scenes was rather lacking.

Marco Ward gave a good account as the Navigation Officer, leading the audience in exercises to right the space ship, and young actors Craig Gray as Captain Tempest and Peter Tolfts as Bosun Arras showed their future promise.

The part of Cookie was played with great physical energy by Sam Parkins. He sang and danced well, and with maturity should have a promising future as a performer. Veteran actor Phil Watkins, looking like someone from a horror film, gave the part of Dr Prospero a sinister aspect.

I was most impressed with Nicole Taylor as Miranda, who has the talent and charisma to control the stage. Possessed of a beautiful singing voice, her rendition of *Teenager in Love* was a highlight. The other performer I thought was exceptionally good was Andy Barke playing Ariel. Dressed in a silver robot costume he performed throughout on roller skates, which he controlled marvellously.

The orchestra, under the direction of Deborah King, played extremely well and it was a pity that the audience weren't given a greater opportunity to be able to express their appreciation at the end of the performance.

Eric George

Listings

ARENA

Wed Oct 5, 8pm, £17.50: Comedy with Milton Jones: *Lion Whisperer*

BARN

The Barn Theatre, Barn Close, Welwyn Garden City, Fri Sep 23 to Sat Oct 1, 8pm, £10, box office (01707) 324300: Alan Ayckbourn's *Man of the Moment*, directed by Godfrey Marriott

CIVIC

Thu Sep 29, 8pm, £10: Comedy night with Mark Oliver, Jason Patterson and Andy Robinson

Sun Oct 2, 3pm, £10.50/£12: *Wonderful Day* – tribute to Doris Day

EXCHANGE

Fri Sep 30, 8pm, £6: The Palm Tree Club, the Beat Poet Experience and the Stanlees perform

Sun Oct 2, midday to 9pm, from £40: Seminar and ghost hunt with Derek Acorah

GCT

Thu Sep 29, 7.45pm, £18: *The Elvys Years*

Fri Sep 30, 8pm, £23.50: Aled Jones

Sat Oct 1 and Sun Oct 2, 7.45pm, £22: *That'll Be The Day* – rock 'n' roll variety show

Thu Oct 4, 7.45pm, £18.50: *The Vagina*

KEY TO VENUES

ARENA – Alban Arena, St Albans, 01727 844488

BARN – The Barn Theatre, Welwyn Garden City, (01707) 324300

CIVIC – Broxbourne Civic Hall, Hoddesdon, (01992) 441946

CORN – Corn Exchange, Fore Street, Hertford, 07904 333923

GCT – Gordon Craig Theatre, Stevenage, 08700 131030

MALTINGS – Maltings Arts Theatre, St Albans, 01727 844222

PLAYHOUSE – Playhouse Theatre, Harlow, (01279) 431945

RHODES – Rhodes Centre, Bishop's Stortford, (01279) 651746

THEATRE – Hertford Theatre, Hertford, (01992) 531500

WYLLYOTTS – Wylllyotts Theatre, Potters Bar, (01707) 645005

Monologues

Wed Oct 5, 7.45pm, £15/£10: *Let's Talk Football* with Dermot Gallagher and Friends

PLAYHOUSE

Thu Sep 29, 7.30pm, £19: An evening of

clairvoyance with TV psychic Tony Stockwell

Fri Sep 30, 7.30pm, £18.50: Marty Wilde and the Wildcats

Sat Oct 1, 7.30pm, £14: *Showstopper!* – The Improvised Musical

RHODES

Fri Sep 30, 8pm, £17/£15: Stacey Kent and her musicians – Grammy Award nominee performs

Sat Oct 1, 7pm, £14: *Sing-a-Long-a Sound of Music*

THEATRE

Thu Sep 29, 7.45pm, £15/£13.50: *Tenorissimo* with Geoffrey Coles, James Fitzgerald and Morgan Lee James

Fri Sep 30, 7.45pm, £14/£12: *Those Magnificent Men* – play about first ever non-stop Atlantic flight

Sat Oct 1, 7.30pm, £20: The Royal Air Force Squadronaires – performance to raise money for the Royal British Legion's 90th anniversary

WYLLYOTTS

Thu Sep 29, 8pm, £18/£17: Colin Fry – *The People's Medium*

Fri Sep 30, 8pm, £18/£17: Cannon and Ball

Sat Oct 1, 8pm, £17/£16: *And Finally... Phil*

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Collins – Stars in Their Eyes finalist Pete Bullitude performs

Sun Oct 2, 11am, £5: *King's Got Donkey Ears* – puppet show for over-4s

Sun Oct 2, 7.30pm, £14/£13: *Explore! Paul Rose* – the BBC presenter talks about his remarkable adventures from Antarctica to Everest

OTHER VENUES

The Old Barge, Folly Island, Hertford, Thu Sep 29, 8.30pm, free: Live jazz with the Keith Michael Quartet

Hawthorn Theatre, Campus West, Welwyn Garden City, Wed Sep 28 to Sat Oct 1, 7.30pm, Sat matinee 2.30pm, £15, box office 07817 754559: Cult musical *Hair*, featuring numbers such as *Let The Sunshine In* and *Aquarius*

Campus West, Welwyn Garden City, Sun Oct 2, 7.45pm, members £10/under-21s £5/non-members £13/£16: Jazz legend Tommy Smith plays Herts Jazz Club

All Saints' Church, Churchfields, Hertford, Wed Oct 5, 1pm, free: Soundbites concert – new organist at Haileybury and All Saints Benedict Wilson performs music by Alain and Mendelssohn

Broxbourne Rowing Club, Old Nazeing Road, Broxbourne, Thu Oct 6, 8pm, adults £10/under-21s £5, box office (01992) 442263: Christian Brewer Quintet performs jazz